

# The Tell Tale Signs of Caregiver Stress



CAREGIVER



BY  WELLMED  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

# Objectives

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

This session will help participants understand:

- What is caregiver stress
- What are the signs of caregiver stress
- How to manage caregiver stress



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# What is stress?

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand either internal or external.
- Caused by both good and bad experiences.
- Stress is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure.



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# What causes caregivers stress?

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

Some sources of caregivers stress:

- Balancing work and caregiving
- Fear of the future
- Lack of knowledge about disease
- Role confusion
- Financial worries
- Family problems



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# The physical side of stress-your mind and body's reaction

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- The stress response is a natural chemical reaction that's intended to help us adequately react to extreme situations.
- When you are faced with a demanding situation, chemicals are released by your brain to your body to help your body get ready for action.
  - Your brain goes on high alert and your immune system temporarily “shuts down” so that your body can give top priority to concentrating on the stress demand.
  - It's not healthy to maintain this “high alert” level on a constant basis-wears down the body systems and end up damaging your physical and emotional health.



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# Warning signs of caregiver stress

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- **Anger** towards the care-receiver, family members or others
- **Anxiety** about facing another day, worrying about what the future holds
- **Denial** about the disease or it's effect on the person affected
- **Depression** (feelings of hopelessness much of the time)
- **Emotional reactions** at minor upsets (irritability, crying, yelling)
- **Exhaustion** (barely having the energy to complete daily tasks)



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# Warning signs of caregivers stress (cont.)

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- **Health problems** like weight gain or loss, getting sick more often (cold, flu), chronic health problems (backaches, headaches, high blood pressure)
- **Lack of concentration** (Trouble focusing and difficulty completing tasks)
- **Social withdrawal** (lack of motivation to stay in touch with friends or to participate in activities that caregiver once enjoyed)



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# The risks of becoming stressed out

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

Some caregiver stress risks:

- You burn out
- Your health suffers
- The quality of care you can provide deteriorates
- Increased mortality rate



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015



# Who is vulnerable to stress?

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

The degree of stress in our lives is highly dependent upon individual factors such as:

- Our physical health
- The quality of our interpersonal relationships
- The number of commitments and responsibilities we carry
- The degree of others' dependence upon us, expectations of us
- The amount of support we receive from others
- The number of changes or traumatic events that have recently occurred in our lives.



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# Assessing the source of your stress

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

Take inventory of:

- Situations that cause you stress
- People that cause you stress
- Environments that cause your stress
- Stressful feelings
- Stressful thoughts

Now ask yourself...

- Of these stressors what can I change and what cannot be changed?



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# General Coping Skills

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- Education:
  - know about the disease and its progression; it will become less scary
  - know about available resources for help; you will feel less overwhelmed
- Acceptance of the situation
  - You don't want it, but don't need to fight it
  - Your future may not be what you had in mind, but you can still make it good



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# General Coping Skills (cont.)

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- Acceptance of yourself as a limited human being
  - Know yourself and set limits
  - You don't have to do everything
  - The only person's expectations you have to live up to are yours
- Knowledge that your loved one's behaviors can't be taken personally
  - Your care receiver's anger, frustration, acting out, etc. are caused by the disease
  - These behaviors are not a choice, nor rational, nor aimed at you



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# General Coping Skills (cont.)

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- Make long term plans to reduce anxiety about the future
  - Plan for all circumstances so decisions don't have to be made during crisis
  - The plan should include legal and financial considerations
- Engage your “circle of support”
  - Have a family meeting to develop the long-term plan
  - Extend requests for caregiving helps to all family and friends
- Be flexible and keep your balance
  - If a plan does not work out, think of another
  - Seek support or professional help if you have difficulty
- Keep your sense of humor



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# Problem-Solving: Step 1

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- Name your problem in very specific words, e.g.,
  - “It is the repetition that gets me every time—I get so frustrated I want to scream “shut up”!
  - Think about when the situation occurs: maybe later in the day, or during periods of high stimulation
  - Think about contributing factors: my fatigue, my anger at feeling out of control



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# Problem-Solving: Step 2

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- Identify things that might cause the problem and keep you from solving it:
  - loved one is tired, maybe over-stimulated, but then he/she begins repeating early in the day
  - Maybe it is my reaction to the repetition: frustration and anger



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# Problem-Solving: Step 3

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- Brainstorm for creative ideas/options:
  - Can I change my loved one's environment?
  - Maybe placement is the answer now?
  - Can I change my reaction of anger and frustration?
    - Idea: I can only control my reactions so I can let the situation unfold without feeling the need to fix it
    - Idea: I am frustrated because I want to undo the situation but I can “take a minute” and change or reframe my thoughts to be more positive



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015



# Problem-Solving: Step 4

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- Weigh the pros and cons of each option
  - Placement is not the answer at this time
  - Changing my reactions to the situation feels like the best thing to do and I think I can, with practice



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# Problem-Solving: Step 5

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

Develop a plan, discuss, and rehearse any steps you need to rehearse:

- I plan to catch myself the next time I feel angry and frustrated with repetition.
- I plan to change the anger to a feeling of acceptance.
- I plan to replace the frustration with the knowledge that my dedication to my loved one is allowing him/her to remain at home for now and have a better quality of life



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# Problem-Solving: Step 6

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

## Evaluate the results

- Did my plan work?
- What might have worked better?
- What changes would I like to make to my plan?



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# What is Caregiver SOS?

*Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

A caregiver support program that provides:

- Wellness-activity programming to support the physical and mental health of caregivers
- Information-assistance with care planning and referral to local community resources
- Support – groups that foster connections to other caregivers
- Education- Education on caregiver topics

Developing WISE caregivers!



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015

# Conclusion

..... *Supporting seniors and family caregivers*

- Questions?
- Contact Information:



**WELLMED**  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

DRAFT COPY 2015